

The North Carolina Chapter of SWANA was formed in 1987 and has a current membership of approximately 460. Like its parent organization, the NC Chapter is committed to advancing the practice of environmentally- and economically-sound management of municipal solid waste in North Carolina.

Founded in 1961, SWANA has become the largest member-based solid waste management association in the world. The majority of SWANA members are public sector officials, while the remainder of the membership includes organizations that provide consulting services, equipment, technologies, and systems in the municipal solid waste management field.

Records from as far back as 1657 show that Manhattan residents were being directed by their local government to not throw garbage in the streets. And, in 1853, the Boston Sanitary Board wrote *"The means resorted to by a large number of citizens to get rid of their garbage and avoid paying for its collection would be very amusing were it not such a menace to public health. Some burn it, while others wrap it up in paper and carry it on their way to work and drop it when unobserved, or throw it into vacant lots or into the river"*.

I state this to make the point that for centuries, local governments have been involved in the practice of solid waste management. The means by which services are delivered has changed dramatically over the centuries, for the good of the public health and the environment. And, private industry has come into the business to offer services and facilities to enhance the ability of local governments to provide those services. Especially since the requirement to have expensive lined landfills, the ability to transfer solid waste to larger, regional facilities has proved to be cost effective for many local governments. All across North Carolina, we find a mix of private and public solid waste collection, transfer and disposal facilities, each regulated by the same statutes and rules, each providing service to protect the public health and the environment.

Solid Waste Management is one of the few services in local government that has both private and public providers. Think about it, no local governments contract out police protection, or the Department of Social Services, or the Public Health Department. But cities and counties often contract out for solid waste collection and/or disposal services, and for a variety of reasons. Some are economic, some are for the purpose of providing services that the local unit cannot afford to do independently, and some just don't want to deal with it if at all possible.

In studying the efficiency and effectiveness of solid waste programs across North Carolina, we have to look at the difference between what the private sector and public sectors provide as well as the similarities. Looking at the broad picture of Integrated Solid Waste Management, that is, the management of all types of waste materials, there are services that are revenue centers and those that are cost centers.

Revenue Centers include:

- Solid Waste and Recycling Collection
- Construction and Demolition Landfills
- Municipal Solid Waste Landfills

All of these services are provided on a fee basis, or by some measurable form of revenue generation.

Cost Centers include:

- Electronics collection and recycling
- Scrap tire collection and disposal
- Yard waste collection and composting
- Household Hazardous Waste collection and disposal
- White goods collection and recycling
- Illegal dumping investigation and disposal
- Monitoring and maintenance of old, closed landfills

Many times, but not always, the Cost Center items I just listed are paid for by the tipping fees, availability fees and user fees generated by the Revenue centers. With local governments being encouraged to operate solid waste programs as enterprises, there is no other source for funds. Thus, efforts to compare fees from one local unit to another, or from a local government to a private provider, are only valid if the fees cover the same scope of services